Prior to examination of the application on the merits, please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 6, line 25, with the following:

FIGURES 4A-4B (SEQ ID NO: 7). The amino acid sequence of human gp130-Fc-His6 (SEQ ID NO: 7). Amino acids 1 to 619 are from human gp130 (Hibi et al., Cell 63:1149-1157 (1990). Note that amino acid number 2 has been changed from a Leu to a Val in order to accommodate a Kozak sequence in the coding DNA sequence. The signal peptide of gp130-Fc-His_6 has been italicized (amino acids 1 to 22). The Ser-Gly bridge is shown in bold type (amino acids 620, 621). Amino acids 662 to 853 are from the Fc domain of human IgG1 (Lewis, et al., J. Immunol. 151:2829-2838 (1993). (†) mark the two cysteines (amino acids number 632 and 635) of the IgG hinge preceding the Fc that form the inter-chain disulfide bridges that link two Fc domains. The hexahistine tag is shown in bold/italic type (amino acids 854 to 859). (•) shows the position of the STOP codon.

Please replace the paragraph starting on page 7, line 7, through page 8, line 5, with the following:

FIGURE 5 (SEQ ID NO: 8). The amino acid sequence of human IL-6Rα-Fc (SEQ ID NO: 8). Key: Amino acids 1 to 358 are from human IL-6Rα (Yamasaki, et al., Science 241:825-828 (1988). Note that amino acid number 2 has been changed from a Leu to a Val in order to accommodate a Kozak sequence in the coding DNA sequence. The signal peptide of IL-6Rα-Fc has been italicized (amino acids 1 to 19). The Ala-Gly bridge is shown in bold type (amino acids 359, 360). Amino acids 361